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SUBJECT: EUR A/S FRIED'S ROME CONSULTATIONS, JUNE 6-7, 2005

Classified By: PolMinCouns Tom Countryman, for reasons 1.5 (B)(D).

1. (C) Summary: EUR A/S Dan Fried met with Italian officials and press June 6-7 to stress our commitment to a strong U.S.-European partnership working through NATO and with the EU ready to tackle worldwide challenges. Italians viewed the "no" votes in France and the Netherlands on the EU Constitution not as a crisis but as an opportunity to improve EU institutions and better explain EU actions to European publics. This was also a chance for Italy to take the lead in strengthening trans-Atlantic relations (at French expense, as an ancillary effect). Rome also wants to prevent the "no" votes from derailing progress on enlargement and engagement. Italy is inclined to provide C-130 support for Darfur but has yet to decide if/how (to EU or NATO) to deploy these assets. In response to Rome's renewed pitch against G-4 proposals on UNSC reform, Fried said the U.S. was stepping back to await a broader consensus. Fried suggested now would be a good time for Italy to reaffirm support for a vulnerable Lebanese interim government and urged Italy to fully fund commitments for Iraq at the June 21-22 Conference. See septel for discussions on Kosovo/Balkans/Ukraine septel. End Summary.

2. (U) EUR A/S Dan Fried, accompanied by Acting EUR DAS Kathy Allegrone met in Rome June 6-7 with MFA Secretary General Umberto Vattani (plus Americas DG Bisogniero, D/DG for Europe Mancini, D/DG for Middle East del Balzo and Dept for European Integration Office Dir Grassi), Gianni Castellaneta, Diplomatic Advisor to PM Berlusconi/Ambassador-designate to Washington (with PM Diplomatic Advisor Scarante, Americas DG Bisogniero, and PM Advisor Francesco Talo), and U/S for Political Affairs Giulio Terzi (with NATO DG Brauzzi and G-8 DG Cantini). Fried also held a lunch with senior newspaper editors and a roundtable discussion with journalists and met with tri-mission and (via DVC) consulate employees in a town hall. A/S Fried's meeting with Vatican Deputy FM Parolin will be reported by Embassy Vatican.

Italy: "No" Votes Are an Opportunity

3. (C) At every meeting, Fried explained that this visit, his first bilateral trip as A/S, was to assess the way ahead in the U.S.-European relationship in the wake of the "no" votes by France and the Netherlands on the EU Constitution. The U.S. had no specific position on the Constitution itself--that was Europe's business--and we recognized that EU countries now had some serious thinking to do about how to better explain the EU to its citizens. But we did not want the EU to react to the "no" votes by withdrawing into introspection that would endanger a vital and active partnership with Europe on a common worldwide agenda. President Bush in his visit to Brussels made it a point to visit the EU as well as NATO--this was no accident. It was a deliberate message, reinforced by Secretary Rice and U/S Burns, that we want an active partnership with Europe.

4. (C) Fried noted that we also wanted to deter some EU members from using the "no" votes to revive anti-Americanism and the bankrupt argument that the EU was a counterweight to the U.S. We needed and wanted a strong trans-Atlantic partnership to move forward on an outward-looking action

agenda to promote democracy, stability and prosperity throughout the Broader Middle East (especially Iraq and Lebanon), the Balkans, the South Caucasus, and Sudan. Fried said this partnership was already a reality with Italy, which we considered a major player in Europe, and he

expressed U.S. appreciation for Rome's support in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo, Forum for the Future and the BMENA initiative.

15. (C) At the MFA, Secretary General Vattani stressed that Italy continues to support EU enlargement in a way that supports the trans-Atlantic partnership. He cited the December 2003 joint statement by Secretary Powell and EU Foreign ministers (drafted by Vattani) that defined common values and threats and supported strengthening the EU-NATO relationship. He recommended the UK during its upcoming EU Presidency use this paper as a basis to build U.S.-EU cooperation. Italy was already engaged, working not only in Iraq and Afghanistan but also with the G-8 on Yemen, the Balkans, Turkey, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. Italy considered the Black Sea states similar to the Mediterranean in importance. Fried agreed that NATO was the core institution of the trans-Atlantic alliance, not just an extension of the U.S., and said we wanted a strong NATO capable of projecting effective multi-nationalism (not just coalitions of the willing) beyond Europe's traditional borders. He welcomed Italy's interest in the Black Sea, the edge of classical Europe, where the EU should be trying to enhance stability. The prospect of EU membership for not just Turkey, but also Georgia and Ukraine, was a magnet to promote democracy and prosperity. Vattani reaffirmed Italy's support for Turkish membership and noted the danger that some states would use the "no" to slow enlargement. This would affect not just Turkey but also Bulgaria and Romania.

16. (C) Castellaneta said the "no" votes did not create a crisis but could not be ignored either. There were ways forward without the Constitution, perhaps to create a Foreign Minister, extend the tenure of the Presidency, and consider more input from individual states. This could also be an opportunity for Italy (read PM Berlusconi) to lead European states to support a more liberal economic agenda, as well as a political program that strengthened the trans-Atlantic relationship (at France's expense, he implied). The point was to show the public that the EU was not just an abstract entity that made life more difficult for Europeans. He did not rule out development of an anti-American agenda by some members, if only as a means to change the subject. In his view, the French vote was a rejection of expansion, a popular French reaction against "Polish plumbers" (i.e., cheap "foreign"workers). Castellaneta, who had just visited Tunis, also commented that the "no" votes were worrying states in North Africa that depended on a strong Europe to promote trade and stability.

17. (C) Terzi, fresh from a G-8 meeting in London, described the UK decision to postpone its referendum as understandable, if not particularly helpful for efforts to stabilize the mood in Europe. There was no need to dramatize events, but Europe must face the lack of public support and understanding for EU institutions--the recent debate among some in Italy for returning to the lira was one example of this reaction.

18. (C) Tactically, Terzi reported the European Council would in the next few days try to assess next steps. They had to absorb the shock and proceed carefully but had to keep in mind the two-year timetable for approval of the Constitution. He echoed Castellaneta's suggestions--to strengthen foreign policy capability, even without the Constitution, and to support stability in the Balkans and Quartet action in the Middle East. It was important to consider the effect of the "no" votes on enlargement; Sofia, he said, is already concerned. Then there is the question of Turkey; Italy supports membership but France could use the votes to slow or block negotiations with

Ankara. Terzi noted that the original concept of the EU had not been to allow a few big states to call the shots on major issues like Iraq or ESDI. The whole point of creating supra-national institutions was to rise above nationalism. Italy could now position itself as a proponent of a Europe comprised of equal partners and strong trans-Atlanticism. There were opportunities to review cooperation with the U.S. every day on Kosovo, Bosnia, Iraq, Afghanistan, MEPP.

UNSC Reform: Final Blow for Integration

19. (C) Vattani commented that the "no" votes exposed deep rifts ("subterranean rivers") within Europe. The G-4 proposal to reform the UNSC would only deepen these rifts, and we could face not only the lack of a common agenda but the possibility the U.S. and EU will not be talking at all. He warned it could create bitter exchanges and mechanical reactions based on nationalist interests that would

reverberate beyond New York. Vattani noted that it was not in Italy's interest to prevent others from joining the Security Council, but Rome remained concerned that reform would create further divisions in Europe. He was not sure that Washington fully understood this.

110. (C) Fried responded that we do appreciate the depth of Italian feeling on this issue. This is a tough issue for us. We support UN reform that improves the efficiency and effectiveness of the institution but UNSC reform must be based on a broad consensus that does not yet exist. This is true even in Asia, where we have already committed to giving Japan a seat. But we are not interested in exacerbating tensions or increasing divisions. This is not just an Italian problem. The U.S. has not yet taken a position on the details of UNSC reform; we want first to see broad consensus. Vattani suggested the U.S. needs to publicize that position and joked, "do we want five more years of Schroeder?"

111. (C) Terzi characterized the G-4 offer on reform as the final blow to European integration, at least for foreign policy. With Castellaneta and Terzi, Fried reiterated that the U.S. wanted to step back to look carefully at the question of UNSC reform. We did not want to exacerbate tensions in the name of improving international relations.

Darfur: Decision on C-130 Deployment June 7

112. (C) Fried told Vattani, Castellaneta and Terzi that there was plenty of work for all in Sudan, but it was important for each country and institution to focus on its competitive advantages. The U.S. and France offered to airlift battalions of the African Union. SHAPE is best positioned to organize an airlift; EU countries have airlift assets to lend. We were asking Italy to provide one-two of its C-130's to this important humanitarian effort. In principle, all the Italians agreed on their desire to help. Vattani noted that an MFA officer had been in Darfur for months and they were planning on providing 200 soldiers. Vattani and Terzi noted that there was an MFA-Ministry of Defense meeting scheduled for June 7 at which it would be decided if and to whom (EU or NATO) the Italians would support deployment of C-130s for Darfur. (Note: As of June 10, the Italians had not yet made a final determination on how to support the airlift.) Francesco Talo indicated that Italy also would be able to extend training in Vincenzo for African peacekeepers if the G-8 could come up with additional funding. Current plans, funded by the U.S. and Italy, called for training 1,000 trainers from seven countries per year beginning in September/October.

Lebanon/Syria

113. (C) In the MFA meeting with Vattani, Fried described Lebanon as being vulnerable and in need of continued U.S.-EU support. Without suggesting we have proof, Fried said one would wonder if the assassination of journalist Samir Kassir was Syria's way of continuing to pressure Lebanon. This would perhaps be a good time to show support for the interim Lebanese government, perhaps with a high-level visit.

114. (C) Vattani responded that the assassination of PM Hariri, and now Kassir, were real blows. Italy has a long relationship, including active cultural ties, with Lebanon and is Lebanon's leading trade partner. The question is Syria. The Syrians, he said, have always responded in devious and obscure ways to all the pressure exerted against them. They withdrew troops but what or who did they leave behind? Vattani wondered if there was a way we can persuade Syria to a "more positive and less obnoxious" stance. Threats do not seem effective, and there could be a time--perhaps not yet--when the EU could offer economic incentives in exchange for better behavior, especially on border and security issues.

115. (C) Fried responded that there was a real risk if the timing of such an initiative was wrong. Asad could easily misinterpret such an offer as a reward for bad behavior. The U.S. understands the possibility of positive outreach, and Fried cited recent policy on Libya and Iran. However, Fried noted that combined U.S.-French pressure had yielded results on withdrawal, and it was important that Asad continue to feel that pressure. A positive outreach to Syria now would be misinterpreted. The U.S. and the EU were working together on Gaza disengagement, a two-state solution and a credible Palestinian state, and democracy in Lebanon. Syria was working against all of these initiatives and was providing real support for fighters killing U.S. and Italian forces in Iraq. It was time Syria

understood it had few friends and needed to change its behavior. We do not rule out in principle positive engagement with Syria, Fried noted, but now is not the time. Vattani held out the possibility that the EU could take some soundings of Damascus to see how they might react to an initiative, but conceded the time is not yet right.

Iraq: Leave the Fish but Reduce the Water

116. (C) Fried told Castellaneta and Terzi that things were steadily improving in Iraq. We deeply appreciated the continued Italian commitment and were pleased Rome would attend the June 22 Conference on Iraq. He told Castellaneta it was important for Italy to fully fund its existing commitments and hopefully unfreeze remaining Iraqi assets here. Castellaneta agreed things were slowing improving vis a vis the insurgency, noting that sometimes it was better to leave the fish but reduce the water in which it swims.

Agreement/Berlusconi Address to Congress

117. (C) Over dinner at the Ambassador's residence, Fried delivered the good news to Castellaneta that Washington had granted his agreement to become Italy's next Ambassador. Castellaneta reported that PM Berlusconi was hoping to schedule his address to a joint session of Congress next spring, perhaps in February-March, depending on the Congressional agenda. (Note: The invitation for the address came from House Speaker Hastert).

118. (U) This message was cleared by A/S Fried.

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